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BOUNDARY INVENTORY FILE

Polish-Soviet Boundary

Problems Associated with the Boundary

There are no disputes between Poland and the USSR over the present alignment of their common boundary. This boundary was established in principle at the Yalta Conference in 1945 and was confirmed by treaty between the two countries in the same year. A slight alteration in the southern portion of the boundary was made by mutual agreement in 1951. The central and southern portions of the boundary are based on the Curzon Line; in the Baltic area where the frontier runs through former East Prussia, the boundary is a generally east-west line passing a few miles north of Goldap in the east and Braniewo in the west. In 1947-48, delimitation negotiations took place and agreement was reached on the Polish-Soviet boundary except in the Baltic area, for which the final agreement on demarcation was not reached until March 1955. Delimitation of territorial waters in this area did not take place until 1958. Technically the West German Government still maintains German claim to all of East Prussia since no postwar agreement has been reached between a united German government and the Soviet Union on the subject of permanent boundaries. Therefore the legal status of the Baltic segment of the Polish-Soviet boundary is not completely settled.

The 1951 adjustment, apparently made from economic motives, involved an equal-area exchange of territory along the southern portion of the boundary that gave the Soviet Union control of certain rail lines, and in return Poland received an area containing oil and natural-gas resources. It seems likely that minor alterations of a similar nature may occur from time to time. Rumors of such changes have been numerous, the most recent involving exchange of the L'vov and Bialystok areas. Some conflict has occurred between Poles and Soviets over [navigation rights and] water control in the Baltic area, but no boundary alteration has yet been projected in this connection.

The present status of the boundary, however, should be viewed against a background of traditional instability, which has been illustrated by several shifts during the present century. At the time the Polish state was recreated after World War I, a line drawn by Lord Curzon, which represented a dividing line between Polish and non-Polish populations, was proposed as the eastern boundary. Polish dissatisfaction with this arrangement and subsequent invasions of the western Ukraine, however, resulted in the Treaties of Riga in 1920 and 1921, which fixed the boundary farther east than the Curzon Line, thereby incorporating within Poland areas of White Russian and Ruthenian population. The division of Poland between Germany and Russia in 1939 and the military occupation of the eastern

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regions of Poland by Soviet forces during World War II reestablished Soviet control of these areas, thereby enforcing acceptance of the old Curzon line as the basis for agreement after the war. Actually, the present boundary runs several miles to the east of the Curzon Line. Removal of Polish peoples from former Polish territory now within the Soviet Union has been effected, thus removing one possible source of conflict over the boundary.